

Message Text

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44

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 COME-00 INT-05 OES-06 CIAE-00 DODE-00

INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-02 USIA-15 PRS-01 SP-02 CEQ-01

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R 141300Z OCT 76

FM AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2435

COMNAVFORCARIB ROOSEVELT ROADS P R

UNCLAS MARTINIQUE 0440

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SWEL, GP

SUBJECT: GUADELOUPE S VOLCANO CALMS DOWN

REF: MARTINIQUE A-66

1. TO ALL INTENTS AND PURPOSES, IT APPEARS THAT THE SOUFRIERE VOLCANO IN GUADELOUPE REACHED ITS PEAK ACTIVITY AND HAS NOW BEGUN TO DECLINE. NO ONE OF COURSE CAN BE CERTAIN ABOUT ITS FUTURE AND THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT THE INHABITANTS OF THE SOUTHERN PART OF BASSE-TERRE ISLAND WILL HAVE TO MAKE ADJUSTMENTS TO LIVING IN A POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS ENVIRONMENT. OFFICIALS IN GUADELOUPE NOW FORESEE A GOOD CHANCE THAT ALL 72,000 EVACUEES WILL BE PERMITTED TO RETURN TO THEIR HOMES PERMANENTLY IN NOVEMBER OF DECEMBER.

2. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF A FEW INSTANCES, THE VOLCANO HAS BEEN RELATIVELY CALM RECENTLY. FOR EXAMPLE, ON SEPTEMBER 23, DESPITE A NINETEEN MINUTE TREMOR, THERE WAS LITTLE OTHER ACTIVITY. ON SEPTEMBER 27, THE VOLCANO REGISTERED 15 VERY MINOR TREMORS PERCIPITABLE ONLY ON INSTRUMENTS, TWO DAYS LATER THERE WAS A MINOR ERUPTION OF GASES AND CINDERS, DURING THE PERIOD OCT 1-2,
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MINOR TREMORS ONLY WERE AGAIN REGISTERED. ON OCT 4, THE LOCAL

ADMINISTRATION RELAXED RESTRICTIONS ON ENTRY INTO THE COMMUNES OF VIEUX HABITANTS AND PART OF CAPESTERRE, AND ALLOWED DAYTIME ACCESS TO TROIS RIVIERES AND PART OF THE COMMUNES OF GOURBEYRE AND CAPESTERRE. ACCORDINGLY SOME 30,000 PERSONS WILL BE ALLOWED FOR THE TIME BEING TO EITHER RETURN TO THEIR HOMES OR WORK DURING DAYLIGHT HOURS NEAR OR AT THEIR PLACES OF RESIDENCE. THE REMAINING 42,000 OF THE 72,000 WHO WERE ORIGINALLY EVACUATED WILL CONTINUE TO BE RESTRICTED FROM ENTRY INTO THE COMMUNES OF BASSE-TERRE, SAINT-CLAUDE, BAILLIF AND A SECTION OF GOURBEYRE UNLESS THEY POSSESS SPECIAL PASSES. FINALLY, ON OCT 8 LOCAL AUTHORITIES ANNOUNCED THAT IN THE LIGHT OF CONTINUING DECLINE IN ACTIVITY (8 VERY MINOR TREMORS WERE REGISTERED BY INSTRUMENT ON OCT 20 AND 21 ON OCT 5) THAT ALL RESTRICTIONS ON MOVEMENT WERE LIKELY TO BE REMOVED SOMETIME IN NOV-DEC.

3. THE ANNOUNCEMENT WAS GREETED WARMLY AND WILL, WE BELIEVE, DO SOMETHING TO CALM THE DEEP CONCERN WHICH ALL SECTORS OF PUBLIC OPINION HAVE EXPRESSED ABOUT THE ECONOMIC EFFECTS THE EVACUATION HAS HAD ON ECONOMIC LIFE IN SOUTHERN BASSE TERRE. THE ECONOMIC DISLOCATIONS WILL CONTINUE TO BE FELT FOR SOME PERIOD AND THAT IN THE REASONABLY NEAR FUTURE THEIR LIVES WILL RETURN TO NORMAL. WE NOTE THERE IS INCREASING RECOGNITION THAT THE SOUTHERN COMMUNES OF BASSE TERRE WILL LIKELY HAVE TO ACCEPT A NEW WAY OF LIFE IN VIEW OF THE GOOD CHANCE THAT THE SOUFRIERE VOLCANO WILL CONTINUE TO BE MORE ACTIVE THAN ANYTIME IN THE PAST DECADE OR TWO. BUT PRESENT INDICATIONS ARE THAT THE RECENT PERIOD OF HIGH VOLCANIC ACTIVITY HAS PASSED.

SHACKLETON

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